

Improving Morale & Quality of Life

Overview

President Bush has made improving the quality of life for our Service men and women a top priority of his Administration, as has the Secretary of Defense. Steps to improve the management of the Department's workforce must be integrated with the development of a new national security strategy and the resulting changes in force structure. These requirements will be the basis for defining the roles and responsibilities of all of the Department's personnel.

The Department of Defense relies on a volunteer military. Recruiting, training and retaining personnel are essential to building and sustaining the Department's workforce. DoD faces a tremendous challenge in maintaining its force today – in terms of both quality and numbers. More young people are going to college, reducing the pool of quality high school graduates that could be recruited into military service. Competition in the private sector is increasing and lures many potential candidates from both military and civilian positions. Frequent military deployments, pay that lacks comparability to the private sector particularly for individuals with some college as is now typical of our enlisted force, and shortages of people, spare parts and equipment threaten morale. Managing and shaping the Department's work force to meet current and future needs and maintaining a force with high morale and quality of life is a challenging task in today's environment. It requires new tools, authorities and management attention.

Several observations underlie the Department's human resources management task:

- Today there is a new "total force" that includes military (both active and reserve), civilian and private sector personnel – all making important contributions to the Department's mission. The roles of and balance between the Department's civilian and military personnel have changed, and will continue to change as the national security strategy evolves, technology changes doctrine and tactics, and our demographic patterns shift over time.
- The Department has a wide range of tools for shaping its workforce, yet many of those available today are either not used or are no longer as effective as they need to be. Some of these tools tend to reflect a "one-size-fits-all" approach that is no longer well suited to the current needs of the workforce. We also need flexibility to respond to changing needs, not just different needs. Tools that allow for greater force shaping flexibility are essential.

The military Services have taken steps in recent years to improve their force management tools, respond to quality of life concerns within the force, and recognize the changing demands that today's military missions place on the troops. These many initiatives have addressed important concerns among the workforce but have been limited by the laws and policies constraining the management of today's forces and without a perspective of future force needs and requirements. The job is not yet complete and what is most needed is a more integrated, comprehensive approach – one that reflects a strategic and

sustained transformation of the Department's human resources management. Such an approach will help to improve morale and ensure a high quality of life for the Department's entire workforce. It will require the coordinated effort of OSD and the Services. The Department needs to take action in four priority areas:

LEADERSHIP

The President has pledged his support to our men and women in uniform with a message that conveys the nobility and value of military service. It is valuable for the chain of command, beginning with the President, to reinforce this message to both the Department's workforce, their families and to the American public. And we need to seek other means of engaging the American public as well. Benefits of this outreach will accrue in the form of enhanced morale and esprit de corps, improved recruiting and retention and enhanced support of the American people for the Administration's defense objectives. At the same time, the Administration can take actions to strengthen the leadership within the Department.

While these are not revolutionary concepts, they have enormous value. More importantly, they are measures that have been overlooked in the recent past, with impact on the morale of our workforce and support of the American public. The Department needs to place a high priority on reestablishing its connection with the workforce and with the American people. There is no simple fix. It will require continued attention through the following kinds of actions:

- Communicate Nobility and Value of Public Service. The profession of arms is a noble calling, not just another job. Leaders and managers in the chain-of-command must make it a priority to recognize our military and civilian workforce and to reinforce the relevance, importance and purpose of ongoing military operations on a regular basis. Members take pride in accomplishing tough but important missions. Respect and value for the workforce can be communicated by employing the workforce judiciously, providing meaningful training, rewarding their performance and recognizing their courage and idealism.
- Engage the American Public. The American public has high confidence in the military as an institution, but this does not translate into a willingness to serve in the Department. The Administration needs to establish a program of outreach to the American people that involves speeches about the value of public service, advertising programs for recruiting that emphasize patriotism and values, and a wide range of citizenship and community-level programs.
- Reinforce Integrity Throughout the Chain of Command building upon the example of the Commander-in-Chief. Through face-to-face communication, the leadership should emphasize the President's values, his insistence on integrity and his belief in the value of the force. The Department must insist on high standards of organizational and personal integrity. In addition, the Department's leadership must make and keep realistic commitments.

Deployment and other operational tempo promises have often been made and later abandoned. Moreover, these tasks can be made more difficult by insufficient manning and a lack of parts and equipment. Shortfalls in these areas send a powerful message about the value, or lack thereof, we place on our people. The message and actions from our leadership must be consistent and extend from high-level deployment commitments to integrity in readiness and maintenance reporting.

- Improve Command Climate. The command climate reflects the personality and style of the commander. High rates of turnover among commanders and senior staff officers contribute to an atmosphere of turbulence and instability in military organizations. In key policy jobs, rapid turnover impedes the sustained effort often required to achieve significant policy change. The command climate is improved when senior military leaders have sufficient time in command to execute a vision. At lower command levels, the need to master the demands of command comes first, leaving little time to mentor junior officers because of the current short duration of command tours. In general, the Services need to reinforce the value of service in command positions.

FORCE MANAGEMENT

The Department of Defense is engaged in transforming its military forces to meet the diverse challenges of the future strategic environment. Critical to success is transformation of the personnel structure of the Total Force to meet the Department's needs and fulfill the aspirations of the work force for productive careers. DoD's efforts to apply advanced technology in developing weapon systems to meet future defense challenges will require parallel efforts to apply the talents of its people in reshaping the force. Old approaches to personnel management are no longer viable. Transforming the Department's human resources management approach needs to be based on the following actions:

- Develop a Human Resources Strategic Plan. The Department and the military Services need to develop a strategic human resources plan encompassing all elements of the total force: military, civilian and private sector personnel. Such a plan is the necessary foundation for reforming human resources management within each Service and across DoD. The plan should define the roles of active and reserve military, civilian and contractor personnel. It should:
 - forecast human resource needs
 - forecast expected available personnel inventories
 - specify overarching goals, policies and resources
 - propose necessary changes in legislation and directives
 - develop the necessary management tools to:
 - enable the Department to attract people with the necessary skills and abilities

- shape careers to meet evolving personnel requirements.
- Determine DoD Personnel Requirements. A strategic plan cannot be comprehensive without a clear understanding of personnel requirements. Technological and organizational change and new military strategies point to different requirements for skills, capabilities and characteristics of the workforce. Changes to personnel requirements must be able to keep pace with rapidly changing technology. Such requirements must also be responsive to the changing demographics of our future forces—we must take actions now to both produce and develop culturally aware leaders 20 years down the road within both our officer and senior enlisted corps. Specific requirements will differ across Services, Commands and occupations, but consistent, department-wide personnel requirements system needs to be established. In the near term, a high-level assessment of requirements is needed in order to commence work on personnel management and compensation. A more detailed system should be developed over time.
- Design Flexible Career Management Systems. Career management approaches are needed for both military and civilian personnel that more effectively match the Department's needs with the desire of the individual for a more productive and satisfying career. New approaches need to respond to changing economic forces and the desires and expectations of today's youth. An effective program will require revision in the laws that govern personnel management (for both civilians and military), enhanced professional development and training programs – particularly for the Department's civilian personnel, and investment in human resources models.
- Redesign Recruiting and Accession Strategies. The military Services recognize that the motivation and rewards of military service are different for today's youth than their predecessors. New active, reserve and civilian recruiting and accession strategies need to be developed that enable more effective recruiting in today's competitive hiring environment. This will involve targeting different markets, such as the college market, wider use of lateral entry and other programs to attract experienced personnel, and streamlining the hiring process within the Department. For critical skill areas, where national shortages exist, the Department needs to partner with the private sector to attract, manage and transition individuals to meet both public and private needs.
- Provide Satisfactory Compensation. Compensation must be adequate to attract, retain, motivate and separate personnel. In the short run, DoD needs to improve elements of the current pay structure. This should focus on reforming the active-duty pay tables by raising military pay for all members and targeting grades that have fallen behind comparable civilian sector earnings. To be competitive, the pay structure must recognize changes in requirements and educational attainment of the workforce. In the long run, the compensation system needs to be modernized to enhance the attractiveness of a military career and provide the needed management flexibility to better shape the size and skill mix of the force. A comprehensive review, currently

underway, is addressing many aspects of military compensation to include pay, retirement (particularly the need for a portable system), special and incentive pays, and Guard and reserve compensation. However, compensation policy follows from the overall strategic plan and the accompanying force requirements. Such issues and their associated effects on compensation will need to be redressed in the context of overall force management decisions.

WORKPLACE

The Department's vast array of facilities and infrastructure – including those that support operational missions, logistics activities and training – are aging and we have not kept pace with needs for improvements, maintenance and repair. This condition will worsen in the years ahead as the Services attempt to spread limited construction and maintenance funds over the existing inventory of facilities, ranges and utility systems. Moreover, facilities have not been fully upgraded to meet the requirements for today's forces, and will be much less suitable for emerging requirements of future forces. Maintaining an effective workplace, that allows individuals to conduct their jobs efficiently and effectively, has a tremendous impact on morale and quality of work.

The Department cannot continue to manage its facilities and infrastructure in a business-as-usual fashion. Through bold steps and “smart” approaches, it is possible to dramatically reshape the Department's infrastructure without adding a tremendous bill to the budget. The following tasks, which can be pursued immediately, with the help of Congress and the President, will establish a successful framework within which our workplace operations can be improved.

- Size and Modernize Infrastructure. Efforts to determine the appropriate size of the Department's infrastructure to meet operational, training and support requirements need to be renewed. Excess facilities and installations need to be closed or eliminated, capitalizing on cross-Service utilization of facilities. The Department must also partner more closely with the private sector in its efforts to repair and modernize facilities in order to provide safe, efficient and quality working conditions. These steps will free up resources that can be used to maintain and modernize remaining facilities.
- Transform Business Processes. Modern business practices and processes must become part of normal operations. The Department has taken many steps in recent years to transform its business processes, but more aggressive action is needed to reduce infrastructure requirements, transform and improve logistics functions, and reduce the number of personnel involved in support activities. More efficient operations can save the Department substantial resources to support needed workplace initiatives.
- Improve Worker Quality of Life by reducing or eliminating excess requirements such as paper work, reports and inspections. Labor saving

technologies and expanded public-private partnerships can help reduce labor requirements and generate workplace efficiency. Moreover, the Department needs to take steps to expand its use of flexible work place approaches, such as telecommuting, that allow work to be accomplished during alternative times and at alternative locations. These approaches, popular in the private sector, can help to make public service a more appealing career option.

PERSONNEL AND FAMILY SUPPORT

President Bush has pledged our service men and women and their families “a decent quality of life. Problems, from low pay to poor housing, reach across our military ...”. As the rate of deployment and pace of work increase, effective support has become more critical to quality of life in the military. Changing demographics, most notably the increase in dual-career and single-parent families, have increased the demand for childcare and other programs. To be successful, we must recruit individuals and retain the family. The Administration must implement a comprehensive program of improvements in family support, to include housing, health care and other family support activities. The key tenets of this program will:

- Provide Better Housing Sooner. The commitment to ensure adequate housing for our men and women in uniform has not been met with the use of appropriated funds. Much of the military housing stock is still in need of revitalization. Privatization demonstrations have proven the effectiveness of public/private ventures, but have not been aggressively implemented. These demonstration activities need to be expanded and accelerated to complete revitalization efforts in housing and community facilities. Such increased goals require the explicit support of the Secretary of Defense to be accomplished.
- Continue to Improve Military Health Benefits. New TRICARE benefits keep the promise of a comprehensive lifetime health benefit for military personnel and eliminate inequity. But the benefit must be managed in a cost-effective way to minimize the drain on defense resources and ensure beneficiary needs are met. The total military medical and health system is in need of reorganization in order to strengthen its management and ensure readiness. Implementation plans are needed for benefits such as TRICARE for Life and TRICARE Prime Remote (including areas where the medical community will not accept TRICARE coverage). The Department must also focus on the needs of other cohorts such as families of deployed Guard and reserve personnel. The funding shortfalls that have consistently been a part of the military health program must be eliminated in the future.
- Respond to Changing Family Demographics in the Military. The family support system has not kept pace with the changing family structure. Nor has it kept pace with the higher aspirations and expectations of an increasingly better educated workforce and their families. Critical enhancements include

childcare; opportunities for military spouses to find employment and programs to develop careers and enhance education; education for military children; and family support networks.

- Address voting concerns. In cooperation with the states, steps need to be taken to modify registration and absentee voting procedures to ensure that service members and their spouses have a fair opportunity to participate in the political process. In addition, the military needs to improve programs to inform service members about voting procedures and ensure processes are in place to comply with state laws.

People are the Department's most important resource—properly trained and motivated individuals, providing the competitive edge and turning equipment and systems into world-class capabilities. Human resource management is the Department's most important resource management task. DoD must renew its investment in the men and women who make up the Department's workforce. Making the needed changes to support this investment will be difficult and complex. Some changes will take a few years, but it is essential to establish a plan and get started now. The four areas discussed above provide a blueprint for action.